

Message from the Rector

September 2, 2018

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

For too many years, the Body of Christ – our Church – has been deeply wounded by the incidents of the abuse of minors, and of other vulnerable persons, by bishops, priests and consecrated religious. We have been scandalized beyond words. The acts have been rightly described as morally reprehensible and criminal. Recent revelations have concerned the lack of governance and oversight by some bishops when faced with known cases of abuse: the Report of the Grand Jury in Pennsylvania; the Vatican Investigation of the Episcopal Conference in Chile; and the report concerning the known misconduct of Archbishop McCarrick of Washington. We are scandalized and, now, have every reason to be outraged – a “righteous anger” in the biblical sense of that term.

The words of the prophet Ezekiel, which were proclaimed on August 22, are pertinent in our circumstances. At a time when the religious and civil authorities of the People of God were abusing their authority, the words of God through the prophet promise that the Lord himself would become the Shepherd of His People: “... thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out.” It is our Catholic Faith that our Church does not belong to the Pope and bishops. We believe that our Church is divinely founded and belongs to God. We are led, in the first instance, by the Holy Spirit. The bishops and the Pope are given a ministry of authority for God’s People, so that we can carry out the Lord’s mission given to the Church. They are called to teach faithfully – in word and deed – the deposit of faith. They are to shepherd the community of faith so that we may deepen our faith in Jesus Christ and become a light for the world.

What are we to do, then, faced with the scandal of clerical abuse and our righteous anger arising from the lack of proper oversight by bishops?

In the first instance, there must be justice for the victims. In many cases, the victims have lost their faith in the Church, even if they have not lost their Faith in God. To the extent that it is possible, proper redress should be given to the victims, both those abused and their families.

In the second instance, the perpetrators of abuse need to face the consequences of justice. For any bishop or priest who has committed an act of abuse, including abuse of trust, he should be sanctioned, including the possibility of dismissal from the clerical state (“laicization”). As for the bishops and other superiors who covered up the instances of abuse, or transferred known abusers into situations where minors and

other vulnerable persons were put at risk, they should be sanctioned, including the possibility of removal from office.

It is difficult for us to know the promptings of the Holy Spirit when instances of injustice remain without proper redress. Whatever the obstacles, let us have the firm conviction that the Holy Spirit is leading our Church through a necessary time of purification and renewal. Our individual contribution to that work of the Holy Spirit is a desire to grow in holiness, knowing that, for each of us, a deeper life in Christ brings the Church, as a whole, to the transparent holiness wished by the Lord for us as a community of faith.

Fr Kevin